The report further suggested the possibility of yield enhancement by 25% with the use of HYV seeds; 25% with promotion of best pest management practices; 20% with supply of irrigation and nutrients and 15% by ensuing proper storage.

Shortage of irrigation facilities

3243. SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the steps taken by Government to bring more area under irrigation and improve farm techniques to ensure food security;

(b) the steps taken by Government to upgrade the agriculture-based research and development and developing new crop varieties that are resistant to different weather conditions;

(c) the details thereof; and

(d) in what manner Government is going to help the farmers during the Rabi season particularly in case of shortage of irrigation facilities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) to (d) Ministry of Water Resources is implementing "Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme" (AIBP) to provide financial assistance to expedite completion of surface- water major and Medium irrigation projects. Central assistance is provided in the form of grant which is 90 percent of the project cost. Funding under programme is made on the basis of proposal made by the State Government. Also, Government is assisting for Promotion of improved method of irrigation like sprinkler and drip irrigation, water intensive crops by less water requiring crops, promotion of System of Rice Intensification (SRI) through crop development schemes of Ministry of Agriculture.

Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has developed crop protection/production technologies, improved varieties /hybrids of different crops that are adapted to different weather conditions, amelioration technology for waterlogged, salt affected and acids soil, etc.

In consultation with Ministry of Power, need based additional demand of the States for power supply has been ensured during critical phases of rabi operations, apart from that irrigation/water conservation component scheme such as sprinkler/drips, pumpsets, percolation tanks have been provided under crop development schemes.

Integrated efforts to mitigate impact of drought

3244. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA:

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether in an effort to provide some relief to people reeling under impact of drought he has asked various Ministries to reconsider imposition of fresh taxes, relax existing taxation and assist States in drought management;

(b) if so, whether he has also written to Ministries and Departments for integrated Governmental effort to mitigate the adverse impact of drought; and

(c) if so, to what extent the Ministries/ Departments have accepted the move?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) to (c) In the wake of drought and drought like conditions in some parts of the country, various Ministries/ Departments of the Government were addressed to assist in reducing the adverse affects of drought / deficit rainfall to the minimum possible. Ministries/Departments, which are imposing Cess/Tax had been, *inter-alia*, requested to take a re-look at such taxes which have a bearing on people affected by drought.

Integrated efforts have been made to mitigate the impact of drought with active involvement of all concerned Ministries/ Departments. Mainly these include, provision of additional allocation of power by Ministry of Power from the Central Pool to the States of Punjab, Haryana, U.P., Bihar, Assam and Andhra Pradesh to enable completion of agricultural operations in the fields; supply of adequate fertilizers by Department of Fertilizers in the areas receiving adequate rainfall; transportation of fodder and drinking water to the States in case of need at no cost basis to the affected States by Ministry of Railways; release of the central share of Calamity Relief Fund to the affected States as well as release of assistance under National Calamity Contingency Fund by Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Finance and Department of Agriculture & Cooperation; broadcasting/telecasting of requisite advisories to the farmers by Ministry of Information & Broadcasting; steps to enhance water sources in the urban and rural areas by Ministry of Urban Development and Ministry of Water Resources; provision of alternative employment under National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme by Department of Rural Development; introduction of a Diesel Subsidy Scheme to enable farmers to provide supplementary protective irrigation to the standing crops and relaxation in the matter of age for seed varieties etc. by Department of Agriculture and Cooperation; ensuring of adequate quantity of fodder for the animals by Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries; additional *ad hoc* monthly allocation of foodgrains to the drought affected States by Ministry of Food and Public Distribution; assistance from Ministry of Earth Science by way of inputs in respect of rainfall status to enable monitoring of the drought situation from time to time; ensuring of availability of petroleum products by Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas; monitoring of diseases and taking preventive measures, in case of need, by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare etc.

Low interest loan to drought hit farmers

3245. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has discussed a proposal to provide interest subsidy to farmers hit by drought;